

Radio Address to the Nation on Tax Reform and the Situation in Nicaragua

December 14, 1985

My fellow Americans:

I have two subjects to speak about today. First, taxes. I think you know how strongly I want to improve our unfair and complicated tax code. A problem that's grown so monstrous over the years isn't easy to correct. But we're on the edge of a breakthrough that can bring personal income tax rates down to the lowest level in over 50 years. This past week the House began final consideration of crucial reform legislation, but because of a parliamentary impasse, the House was unable to vote. Unless it's overturned, the result can only be a defeat for all Americans, who know taxes are too high and the system is hopelessly unfair. Today I'd like to make a personal request of the

House of Representatives. You have the opportunity to provide the relief millions of Americans demand. If, together, Republicans and Democrats would agree to a format for considering this vote, I believe there will be sufficient bipartisan support for tax reform to pass. This is one time politics must be put aside on both sides of the aisle. There are ways to permit this much-needed reform to go forward. There are ample excuses for not going forward; there will be no justification if it does not.

Now, I must address recent disturbing events in a country close to our borders—the Communist dictatorship in Nicaragua. Nicaragua today is an imprisoned nation. It

is a nation condemned to unrelenting cruelty by a clique of very cruel men—by a dictator in designer glasses and his comrades, drunk with power and all its brutal applications. They stripped the Nicaraguan people of their rights by a state decree last October 15th, yet that decree only made official, and by their reckoning permissible, the theft of liberty that took place years ago.

No institution more deeply embodies or glorifies or seeks to perfect the moral and spiritual goodness of man than the church in all of its denominations. Yet in Nicaragua, the church is the enemy. Protestant ministers and lay people have been arrested, interrogated, and tormented at secret police headquarters; some forced to stand naked in very cold rooms for long periods. A tiny population of Jews was bullied and driven out. Cardinal Obando y Bravo, a great hero of truth and courage, is prevented from speaking freely to his flock. The state police have expelled foreign priests and drafted seminarians, who are virtual prisoners in the Sandinistas' armed forces. And the Catholic Church's newspaper has been seized and Radio Catolica censored, sometimes shut down entirely. The same dictators who insulted Pope John Paul II also stopped Radio Catolica from broadcasting a letter from the Pope and this beatitude: "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven." The truth is, these men are nothing but thugs, a gang of hardcore Communists to whom the word of God is a declaration of liberation that must be stamped out.

Their denial of rights, their trampling of human dignity, their wrecking of an economy with suffocating socialist controls—all hurt and deeply offend us. But there's a cause for deeper concern: the specter of Nicaragua transformed into an international

aggressor nation, a base for subversion and terror. Some 3,000 Cuban military personnel now lead and advise the Nicaraguan forces down to the smallest combat units. The Cubans fly the Soviet assault helicopters that gun down Nicaraguan freedom fighters. Over 7,000 Cubans, Soviets, East Germans, Bulgarians, Libyans, PLO, and other bloc and terror groups are turning Managua into a breeding ground for subversion. A delegation of Nicaraguans is now in Iran. Nicaragua's border violations against Honduras and Costa Rica continue. And Nicaragua's connection with the recent terrorist attack against Colombia's Supreme Court is now clear.

What are we to do about such aggressions? What are we to do about Cuba's willful disregard of the 1962 Kennedy-Khrushchev understanding of which President Kennedy said, ". . . if Cuba is not used for the export of aggressive Communist purposes, there will be peace in the Caribbean."? Well, the answer is: more than we're doing now. If Nicaragua can get material support from Communist states and terrorist regimes and prop up a hated Communist dictatorship, should not the forces fighting for liberation, now numbering over 20,000, be entitled to more effective help in their struggle for freedom? Yes, and to reinforce this message, I sent my new national security adviser, John Poindexter, this week to visit the Central American democracies and make clear our commitment to a democratic outcome in Nicaragua. Those who struggle for freedom look to America. If we fail them in their hour of need, we fail ourselves as the last, best hope of liberty.

Until next week, thanks for listening. God bless you.

Note: The President spoke at 12:06 p.m. from the Oval Office at the White House.